

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

**ASSURANCE WIRELESS' ANNUAL
ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIER REPORT**

June 30, 2015

I. INTRODUCTION

Assurance Wireless of South Carolina, LLC (“Assurance Wireless” or “Company”) submits this Annual Report, pursuant to Order No. 2011-76, and respectfully requests the Commission certify its eligibility for Lifeline support from the federal universal service fund for calendar year 2016. Assurance Wireless is a competitive carrier that has been designated as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (“ETC”) solely for purposes of offering prepaid wireless telecommunications services supported by the Lifeline program. Its ETC designation does not entitle it to receive high-cost support from the federal universal service fund.

In 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-690.1 the Commission specifies its annual reporting requirements for ETCs. Please find herein information responsive to those requirements.

II. COMPLIANCE WITH CTIA CONSUMER CODE FOR WIRELESS SERVICE AND OTHER SERVICE QUALITY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION RULES

The Commission requires a wireless ETC to certify that it is complying with all applicable service quality standards and consumer protection rules, e.g., the CTIA Consumer Code for Wireless Service.¹ Assurance Wireless affiliate Virgin Mobile USA, L.P. became a voluntary signatory to the Consumer Code in 2004. Since adopting the Consumer Code, Virgin Mobile and its affiliates have implemented the policies and practices required of signatories. This means that Assurance Wireless has implemented policies so that it:

- (1) Discloses rates and terms of service to consumers.
- (2) Makes available maps showing where service is generally available.
- (3) Provides contract terms to customers and confirms changes in service.
- (4) Allows a trial period for new service.
- (5) Provides specific disclosures in advertising.
- (6) Separately identifies carrier charges from taxes on billing statements.
- (7) Provides customers the right to terminate service for material changes to contract terms.

¹ 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-690.1(B)(a), 103-690.1(B)(b)(5).

- (8) Provides ready access to customer service.
- (9) Promptly responds to consumer inquiries and complaints received from government agencies.
- (10) Abides by policies for protection of customer privacy.

Assurance Wireless certifies that it is in compliance with all applicable service quality and consumer protection requirements and standards, including the CTIA Consumer Code for Wireless Service. A copy of CTIA's most recent certification issued to Assurance Wireless and its affiliates is included as **Attachment 1**. Assurance Wireless has complied and will continue to comply with the principles set forth therein.

III. ASSURANCE WIRELESS' LIFELINE REPORTING

A. Assurance Wireless' Unfulfilled Requests For Service

An ETC must make an annual report of the number of requests for service from potential customers within its service areas that were unfulfilled for the most recent calendar year.² The filing must also detail how it attempted to provide service to those potential customers. Assurance Wireless did not have any unfulfilled requests for service from qualified applicants in 2014.

B. Assurance Wireless' Complaints Per 1,000 Handsets Or Lines

The Commission requires an ETC to annually report the total number of complaints and number of complaints per 1,000 handsets or lines for the most recent calendar year.³ Assurance Wireless had 0.2384 complaints per 1,000 handsets for the 2014 calendar year.

² 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-690.1(B)(b)(3).

³ 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-690.1(B)(b)(4).

C. Assurance Wireless' Certification Regarding Emergency Functionality

The Commission requires an ETC to certify that it is able to function in emergency situations.⁴ Virgin Mobile is an affiliate of Sprint Nextel Corporation ("Sprint"), provides service using the Sprint network and certifies that it is able to remain functional in emergency situations based on FCC Rule 54.202(a)(2). Sprint has a detailed Business Continuity Program that meets this requirement. The Business Continuity Program is the framework in which Sprint sets policies for network resiliency, the development and conduct of emergency preparedness exercises and the formation of its Emergency Response Team. Attached as **Attachment 2**, please find a copy of the Sprint Business Continuity Planning Program Overview.

D. Assurance Wireless' Certification Regarding Its Provision Of A Comparable Local Usage Plan

The Commission requires an ETC to certify that it has a local usage plan comparable to the incumbent LEC in the relevant service area.⁵ Assurance Wireless's basic Lifeline service offering provides eligible customers with 250 anytime prepaid minutes and unlimited texts each month at no charge, with additional service priced at \$0.10/minute for local and long-distance calling and \$0.10/text message. Assurance Wireless Lifeline customers entirely at their option can purchase blocks of additional services. Under the first option, Lifeline customers can add \$5 to their account to purchase an additional 250 monthly minutes, providing them with a total of 500 voice minutes in a month (250 free minutes plus 250 additional minutes), plus unlimited texts. Under the second option, Lifeline customers can add \$30 to their account to purchase unlimited talk, text and web. The rates for service under all plans include all applicable taxes

⁴ 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-690.1(B)(b)(6)

⁵ 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-690.1(B)(b)(7)

and fees, and customers can use their monthly minutes to place calls statewide (or even nationwide) because none of the plans imposes a local calling area requirement. Each service plan also includes voicemail, caller I.D. and call waiting services at no additional charge. Assurance Wireless also does not assess additional charges for activation or connection of Lifeline service. As a result, Lifeline customers will receive free service with no additional charges for taxes or activation. Accordingly, Assurance Wireless offers a variety of plans in South Carolina that do not have a limited calling scope. Assurance Wireless certifies that it offers a local usage plan comparable to the incumbent LEC in relevant service areas in South Carolina.

E. Assurance Wireless' Certification Regarding The Requirement To Provide Equal Access

As required by the Commission⁶, Assurance Wireless acknowledges that the Federal Communications Commission may require it to provide equal access to long-distance carriers in the event that no other ETC is providing equal access within one of its Service Areas.

F. Number of Lifeline Customers

The Commission requires ETCs to inform it of the number of customers receiving service in the prior year.⁷ Assurance Wireless had 37,754 customers as of December 31, 2014.

G. Copies of Responses to Lifeline Verification Survey or Certification filed with USAC

The Commission requires ETCs to file copies of responses to the Lifeline Verification Survey or Certification filed with the Universal Service Administrative Company ("USAC") on

⁶ 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-690.1(B)(b)(8)

⁷ 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-690.1(B)(b)(9)

August 31 of each year.⁸ Attached as **Attachment 3**, please find a copy of Assurance Wireless's most recent Lifeline Verification Survey or Certification filed with USAC.

IV. CONCLUSION

Assurance Wireless respectfully requests that the Commission certify the Company's eligibility to receive Lifeline funds in accordance with 47 C.F.R. § 54.416.

Respectfully submitted,

s/John J. Pringle, Jr.
John J. Pringle, Jr.
Adams and Reese LLP
1501 Main Street, 5th Floor
Columbia, SC 29201
803-343-1270
Jack.pringle@arlaw.com

John Monroe
Counsel, Regulatory Affairs
3065 Akers Mill Rd., SE
Mailstop GAATLD0704-739
Atlanta, Georgia 30339

Counsel for Assurance Wireless

cc: Office of Regulatory Staff

⁸ 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-690.1(B)(b)(10).